

[VA.gov home](#) [Disability benefits](#) [How to file a claim](#) [Evidence needed](#)  
[Fully Developed Claims program](#)

In this section



# program

If you want to get a faster decision on your disability benefits claim by submitting evidence along with your claim, use the Fully Developed Claims program. Find out how to submit a fully developed claim. And learn what evidence you'll need to submit along with your claim.

## What do I need to do to submit a fully developed claim?

Here's what you'll need to do for us to consider your claim fully developed:

- Submit your completed [Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits \(VA Form 21-526EZ\)](#). (<https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-21-526ez>), **and**
- Submit all the evidence (supporting documents) you have along with your claim, **and**
- Certify that there's no more evidence we might need to decide your claim, **and**
- Go to any VA medical exams that we schedule, if we decide these exams are needed to make a decision on your claim

# What evidence will I need to submit along with my disability claim?

## You'll need to submit this evidence:

- All private medical records related to the claimed condition, like reports from your own doctor or X-rays or other test results from a non-VA hospital or other treatment center, **and**
- Any records of medical treatment you've received for the claimed condition while serving in the military, **and**
- Any military personnel records you have that relate to the claimed condition, **and**
- Information about any related health records that you don't have but that we can request on your behalf from a federal facility like a VA medical center or clinic

**If you think your service records don't include a description of your disability**, you can also submit letters from family members, friends, clergy members, law enforcement personnel, or those you served with that can tell us more about your claimed condition and how and when it happened.

**Note:** In 1973, a fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis destroyed records held for Veterans who were discharged from the Army and Air Force during certain periods of time. If your records were destroyed in this fire, you can get help reconstructing them.

[Find out how to reconstruct your records \(https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/reconstruct-records\)](https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/reconstruct-records).

## Are there any risks to using the Fully Developed Claims program?

No. Filing a fully developed claim won't affect the attention we give to your claim or the benefits you're entitled to receive.

If we determine that we need other non-federal records to make a decision on your claim, we'll simply remove the claim from the Fully Developed Claims program and process it as a standard claim.

## What should the evidence show to support my disability claim?

This depends on the type of claim you're filing.

[Check what evidence is needed for different types of claims](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/)  
(<https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/>).

## Can VA help me gather evidence?

Yes. We can help you gather evidence for the Fully Developed Claims program in these ways:

- We'll request your military service records (with your permission), **and**
- We'll request relevant Social Security benefits information and medical records that you identify and authorize us to get from a federal facility, like a VA medical center, **and**
- We'll schedule a health exam for you or get a medical opinion from a health care provider if we decide we need it for your claim

**Note:** Even though we'll gather federal records (like your DD214 or VA medical records) on your behalf, we encourage you to submit these if you have them to save time in the process.

## When should I turn in my evidence?

You'll need to turn in your evidence at the same time as you file your claim. If you're filing online, upload your medical evidence or supporting documents at the end of the disability compensation form.

If you turn in more information or evidence after you submit your fully developed claim, we'll remove your claim from the FDC program and process it as a standard claim.

## **How do I file a fully developed claim?**

You can file a fully developed claim online, by mail, by fax, in person, or with the help of a trained professional.

[Find out how to file a fully developed claim for disability compensation \(https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim\).](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim)

## **Should I work with a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representative to file my claim?**

You don't have to, but we encourage you to work with an accredited VSO representative. These trained professionals can help you file your claim and gather the needed medical records and evidence.

[Get help filing a claim \(https://www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative\).](https://www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative)

## **Should I submit an intent to file?**

If you're not ready to file your claim yet, you may want to submit an intent to file. This sets a potential start date (or effective date) for your benefits, so you may be able to get retroactive payments. These are back payments for the time between when you submitted your intent to file and when we approved your claim.

[Find out how to submit an intent to file](#)

[.https://www.va.gov/resources/your-intent-to-file-a-va-claim\)](https://www.va.gov/resources/your-intent-to-file-a-va-claim)

## More information about disability claims

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### [Pre-discharge claim](#)

Learn how to file a disability claim through the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program.

### [Exposure to hazardous chemicals and materials](#)

Learn more about claims for conditions related to contact with hazardous materials.

### [Disability benefits for former prisoners of war \(POWs\)](#)

Learn more about claims for former prisoners of war (POWs).

### [Special claims](#)

Learn more about other special claims.

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